

International

Libya ready to talk with US, Britain on Lockerbie issue

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 19: Libya said on Friday it is ready to negotiate with the United States and Britain on an avenue for the trial of the two Libyan suspects in the 1988 airline bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, reports AFP.

Expulsion of Palestinians Rabin refuses to change decision

JERUSALEM, Dec 19: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stood firm in the face of widespread condemnation of the expulsion of more than 400 Palestinian prisoners, now stranded between Lebanese and Israeli army lines in south Lebanon, reports Reuter.

Khmer Rouge guerillas capture UN helicopter

PHNOM PENH, Dec 19: Khmer Rouge guerillas captured a UN helicopter carrying eight armed Uruguayan peacekeepers in eastern Cambodia, reports AFP.

BRIEFLY

Lightning kills 11 in Jakarta: Lightning struck a village in West Java, killing at least 11 and seriously injuring 15, a news report said Saturday, AP reports from Jakarta.

The daily Media Indonesia said 26 sand diggers along a river in Kertajati district, Malaengka regency, around 200 kilometers (125 miles) southeast of Jakarta, were waiting for a bus Wednesday when lightning struck.

The report quoted local residents as saying they heard screams after the lightning hit.

US senator to visit DPRK soon: US senator Bob Smith is planning to go to North Korea this weekend to discuss the fate of American servicemen still missing from the Korean War, AP reports from Washington.

Smith, vice-chairman of the Senate Select Committee on POW-MIA affairs, said Friday plans to hold talks in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang on Sunday. The visit is taking place less than two weeks before the committee is scheduled to disband.

Smith, a New Hampshire Republican, will be accompanied by a Korean-speaking State Department official, Ken Quinones. No US diplomat and almost no lawmakers have visited the communist-ruled northern part of Korea.

According to US government estimates, 8,177 American servicemen never returned from the Korean War.

Russia to help remove Iraqi N-fuel: Russia is to help the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to remove nuclear fuel from Iraq and reprocess it in Russia, Itar-Tass news agency said on Friday, Reuter reports from Moscow.

The agency said Russian participation in removing the material from an Iraqi nuclear research reactor was in line with UN Security Council resolutions.

After reprocessing, the nuclear material will be handed over to the Vienna-based IAEA, said a UN spokesman.

The IAEA, together with a UN special commission, is overseeing the destruction of Iraq's nuclear weapons programmes under terms worked out after Iraq's defeat in last year's Gulf War.

ROK to normalise tie with Vietnam: South Korea will normalize diplomatic relations next week with Vietnam to end their Cold War animosity that developed during the Vietnam War, Foreign Ministry officials said Saturday, AP reports from Seoul.

Ministry spokesman Yoo Myung-hwan said normalization would be announced during Foreign Minister Lee Sang-ock's three-day visit December 21-23 to Vietnam.

The new ties will cap a year-long South Korean bid to expand economic relations with Vietnam.

Vietnam has tried to entice South Korean firms to invest in its development projects. South Korea wants to use Vietnam's resources and labour as a new base for its overseas investment.

2 white US cops fired: Two white police officers were fired Friday for using excessive force to subdue a black motorist who turned out to be an undercover officer working on a prostitution sting, AP reports from Nashville.

The officer was stopped Monday night by five of his precinct colleagues for driving an unmarked, police-issue truck with an expired license tag.

Officers David Geary and Jeffrey Blewett were dismissed during a hearing by Police Chief Robert Kirchner. Police department hearings for the other three officers, who remain on leave without pay, probably will be next week.

The chief said after the hearing that the officers' testimony showed the beating was not racially motivated. The FBI has been trying to determine if the black officer's civil rights were violated.

7 killed in Indian road mishap: Seven persons were killed and five others injured when a trucker in which they were travelling dashed against a roadside tree at Malpara on the Calcutta-Madras National Highway, eight km from the sub-divisional headquarter town of Khurda in Puri district on Friday, according to the police, PTI reports from Puri.

The victims, workers of the Samyukta Samajwadi Party, were going from Talcher to Gopalpur, the sources said.

The injured were admitted to government hospitals at Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.



WASHINGTON: US President George Bush (R) meets with the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace talks, delegation head Faisal Hussein (C) and spokesperson Hanan Ashrawi (L) at the White House on Friday. This round of the talks ended on Thursday and is expected to recess until President-elect Bill Clinton takes office in January, 1993.

Tajiks set deadline for surrender

MOSCOW, Dec 19: The new government of Tajikistan on Friday gave opposition militants 10 days to surrender or face a massive crackdown in the war-ravaged Central Asian state, news agencies reported, says AP.

The ultimatum by new Tajik leader Emomali Rakhmonov said government forces will be authorized to open fire at noon December 28 on any anti-government fighters who do not surrender their guns, ammunition and military vehicles, the Interfax news agency reported.

The statements amounted to a new declaration of war between the loose alliances that have battled for control since March. A grouping of Islamic and democratic parties took power in September after forcing ex-Communist President

Rakhmonov to resign. They were edged out of power in November by an alliance of Nabyev supporters, former Communist officials, ethnic Uzbek militias and southern Kulyab tribesmen.

The new government finally gained control of the capital Dushanbe last week, but fighting has continued.

Skirmishes broke out closer to the city centres on Friday between government and pro-Islamic fighters, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. It said infiltrations continued over the country's southern border with Afghanistan, which is controlled by Russian-led border guard units.

The new government on Friday called on Afghan leaders in Kabul to help prevent illegal

crossings from both sides, Interfax reported.

Tajikistan "appeals to the government of Afghanistan with a request to abide by the principles of good-neighbourly relations and respect for state sovereignty and stop violations of the countries border," Interfax reported.

Far to the west, meanwhile, separatists in Georgia buried the victims of a helicopter crash last week that has aggravated Russian-Georgian relations in the troubled Caucasus Mountains region, Interfax said.

The bodies of 59 people were buried in a mass grave, according to local custom, in the town of Gaduata in the breakaway region of Abkhazia, site of one of three ethnic and political conflicts ravaging Georgia.

Klerk dismisses six generals

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Dec 19: President F W de Klerk dismissed six generals Saturday and admitted the military is waging a secret campaign against opposition groups that could include killings, reports AP.

De Klerk said some military operatives were still involved in unspecified illegal activities and the government was taking urgent steps to halt the operations. He claimed top government officials did not know of the illegal activities.

"I think I can say, yes, that the findings will lead to the conclusion that some of the activities have led to the death of people," a stern-faced de Klerk told a news conference.

Government opponents have long claimed the military

acts as a "third force" to destabilize opposition groups and foment violence in black townships that has claimed thousands of lives in recent years.

De Klerk, who has repeatedly denied allegations of military misconduct, gave few details but said the offences ranged from political sabotage to criminal activities for personal gain.

The investigation showed military personnel and "collaborators of the South African Defense Forces have been involved, and in some cases are still involved, in illegal and unauthorized activities and malpractices," he said.

He indicated Military Intelligence was the main source of the problem. The

controversial wing of the defence forces has been implicated repeatedly in political dirty trick campaigns.

The admissions are likely to damage de Klerk's already weakened government as it negotiates with the African National Congress on ending white minority rule.

Recent revelations of other scandals, including illegal activity by police and government corruption, have undermined de Klerk as he tries to retain public confidence.

Opposition groups have used the government's problems to force concessions in power-sharing talks.

Following the revelations, the ANC is likely to take an even tougher line in upcoming talks on an interim administration.

6 tribal youths buried alive in Tripura

AGARTALA, Dec 19: ATTF tribals yesterday buried alive six tribal youth and shot dead a village chairman in different parts of Tripura, reports PTI.

Tripura's Education Minister, Rabindra Debbarma told newsmen that the youths, reportedly supporters of the Tripura Uparaji Juba Samity (TUJS), a coalition partner of the ruling Congress-I, were kidnapped from their homes and then buried alive at Christianpara under Gandacherra subdivision of south Tripura district to "teach them the consequences of supporting the TUJS."

The ultras also intimidated the villagers that a similar punishment would be meted to them, Debbarma said.

The ATTF militants also kidnapped and later shot dead the village chairman of Uttar Brajanagar Gaonsbha under Udaypur subdivision of south Tripura district, police sources said.

The chairman was a TUJS activist.

In a separate incident, the insurgents waylaid a truck on the Ambassa-Gandacherra road and looted belongings of the passengers. However, the amount of looted property could not be ascertained, police said.

The father, Rathmalgodaye Sirirsena, said he had come home from work one day to find his wife and two of their six children missing.

The father traced the children to the job agency but when he was not allowed to see them, he made a complaint to the police, Sirirsena told the court.

An unexpected Christmas gift LONDON: A woman whose handbag was stolen in August got an unexpected Christmas gift when she won a prize in a lottery the thief had entered her for, reports Reuter.

The woman thief bought two Christmas trees with a cheque stolen from Jane Pearson and then used Pearson's name and address when she bought a raffle ticket from the shop in Yorkshire, northern England.

Lincoln's fragile document on a rare public display WASHINGTON: Handled with white gloves, President Abraham Lincoln's 1865 Emancipation Proclamation ending slavery in the United States was taken from its darkened vault Friday for a rare, five-day exhibition, reports AP.

Bearing Lincoln's fading signature, the Civil War document hasn't been displayed in more than a dozen years.

It will go on exhibition December 31 through January 4 in the National Archives, where the Constitution and Declaration of Independence are displayed. The exhibit marks the 13th anniversary of the proclamation's signing on New Year's Day, 1863.

Because it is so vulnerable to damage, particularly from exposure to light, the document hasn't been shown to the public since 1979 and display is being strictly limited this time.

"We consider the Emancipation Proclamation one of the treasures of the archives," said senior conservator Catherine Nicholson. "The only way we can keep it safe for the next generation and the next century is to be very moderate in our exhibition."

China urges Israel to stop expelling Palestinians

BEIJING, Dec 19: China has called on Israel to allow more than 400 deported Palestinians to return home, a Foreign Ministry statement said Saturday, reports AP.

The statement, issued by the official Xinhua News Agency, said, "This act has violated the Geneva Convention and impaired the Middle East peace process."

The Palestinians are fundamentalists whom Israel deported Thursday in retaliation for the abduction and murder of an Israeli border policeman by the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas.

The UN Security Council voted unanimously late Friday to denounce the deportation and demand Israel allow the Palestinians to return. China is one of five permanent members of the Security Council.

NATO confident about Ukraine's giving up of nuclear weapons

BRUSSELS, Dec 19: NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner said on Friday he was confident Ukraine would give up all nuclear weapons and ratify a key arms treaty, despite delays by Kiev which have provoked sharp US criticism, reports Reuter.

Ukraine's representative at a meeting of NATO and former Warsaw pact members in Brussels said his country wanted international security guarantees if it gives up the weapons on its soil which were once part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal.

"I wouldn't call it reassuring," Woerner told a news conference after the meeting. But he added: "I am confident that we can convince the Ukraine to stick to its publicised intention of giving up the weapons."

The Ukraine representative, Volodymyr Vassylenko did not make clear at the meeting who should give security guarantees or whether

they should come before the country finally gets rid of the nuclear arms, officials said.

In Kiev, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko accused western countries of using threats to push his country into ratifying the arms treaty.

Speaking to reporters in parliament, he did not single out any specific country in his criticism.

But his comments followed US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger warning to Ukraine on Thursday that relations with Washington would deteriorate if it continued to delay ratifying a special annex to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).

Washington also wants Ukraine to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear state.

"It is in the interest of all, including Ukraine, to adhere to the NPT as a non-nuclear state and to ratify the START

agreement," Woerner said.

Zlenko told Eagleburger earlier this week the Kiev parliament would not be able to act on these issues until the start of next year at the earliest.

The START agreement was originally negotiated between the United States and the Soviet Union. It slashes their arsenals of long-range nuclear weapons by about a third.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States had to address the question of nuclear weapons stationed on the territory of three newly-independent non-Russian republics — Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Earlier this year, it negotiated an annex to start with each under which the nuclear weapons on their soil would be transferred to Russia and the three would declare themselves non-nuclear states.

Belarus and Kazakhstan have ratified the treaty.



BRUSSELS: US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger (R) speaks with British Ambassador John Weston (C) and Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin (L) while Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaly Tchoukine (C rear) chats in background with US Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew (R rear) prior to the Foreign Ministers meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council on Friday.

\$200m Marcos' deposit to be transferred

MANILA, Dec 19: The government and lawyers of former First Lady Imelda Marcos have agreed to transfer 200 million dollar of Marcos deposits in Swiss Banks to the Philippines, Marcos' Chief negotiator said here today reports AFP.

Lawyer Antonio Coronel said this would be the first of 356 million dollar in Marcos' Swiss Bank deposits to be transferred to the Philippines and held in Escrow.

The Swiss funds were previously frozen at the request of Manila which alleged the money was part of government funds that deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his wife looted from state coffers before he was ousted in a popular revolt in 1986.

Goerz could not be contacted for comment.